

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KATHMA 01623 301140Z
ACTION SCS-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NEA-10 CA-01 H-02 L-03 HA-05
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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1553

UNCLAS KATHMANDU 1623

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CASC
SUBJECT: OVERDUE RAFTING GROUP

REF: STATE 081299

1. GOVERNMENT OF NEPAL (GON) IS LIMITED IN ITS SAR RESOURCES, AND IS CONDUCTING SEARCH WITHIN THOSE LIMITS. CURRENT EFFORTS CONSIST OF SENDING MESSAGES TO CIVIL ADMINISTRATION AND POLICE AUTHORITIES IN DISTRICTS THROUGH WHICH KARNALI RIVER PASSES. THERE ARE THREE POSSIBLE TRIBUTARIES OF KARNALI WHICH GROUP MIGHT HAVE ENTERED TO BEGIN RAFT TRIP.

2. EMBASSY HAS RAISED QUESTION OF GON FUNDING OF AERIAL SEARCH FOR GROUP WITH MFA UNDERSECRETARY IN CHARGE OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS. HE HAS REFERRED MATTER TO MINISTRY OF HOME AND PANCHAYAT, AND SUGGESTS WAITING FOR REPLIES TO MESSAGES TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES BEFORE FURTHER GON ACTION. SO FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, GON HAS NEVER FUNDED SUCH AN OPERATION, AND WE ARE NOT SURE WHAT OUTCOME OF CURRENT CONSIDERATION OF ISSUE WILL BE. HIMALAYAN RESCUE ASSOCIATION, A PRIVATE ORGANIZATION DEALING WITH SUCH PROBLEMS, IS PERENNIALY SHORT OF FUNDS AND CURRENTLY IS HAVING DIFFICULTY SUPPORTING THE ONE HEALTH POST IT
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OPERATES NEAR MT. EVEREST.

3. HOWEVER, AS TRANS-HIMALAYAN TREKKING SENT TWO MEMBERS OF THEIR NEPALESE STAFF WITH GROUP, THEY INTEND TO ADVANCE SUFFICIENT FUNDS TO COVER COST OF LIGHT PLANE SEARCH FOR GROUP ON ASSUMPTION THAT FUNDS WILL AT SOME POINT BE RECOVERED. TRANS-

HIMALAYAN HAS ALSO BOUGHT PAID ADVERTISEMENTS ON RADIO NEPAL REQUESTING THAT PERSONS WHO MIGHT HAVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE GROUP CONTACT THE POLICE OR LOCAL OFFICIALS, AND INFORM MEMBERS OF GROUP THAT THERE IS AN EMERGENCY MESSAGE FOR GROUP IN KATHMANDU.

4. TRANS-HIMALAYAN HAS REQUESTED CHARTER FLIGHT FOR FRIDAY, MARCH 31. IF GROUP IS LOCATED, AND IN NEED OF HELP, HELICOPTER WILL BE CHARTERED FOR RESCUE OPERATION. HOWEVER, PLANE TO BE USED FOR SEARCH AND SWISS PILOT ARE STRANDED IN MOUNTAINS DUE TO SNOWFALL, AND MAY NOT BE BACK IN KATHMANDU IN TIME TO MAKE FLIGHT. HECK

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